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SUBJECT: BIOTECHNOLOGY IN MOZAMBIQUE

¶1. SUMMARY: A signatory of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Mozambique is eager to leverage biotechnology to improve its agricultural productivity; however there has been little or no investment in biotech research thus far. The government of Mozambique (GRM) is calling for a second green revolution and biotechnology is a tool to advance the agricultural sector. This cable was developed by FAS/Pretoria in coordination with Embassy Maputo. END SUMMARY.

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Biotechnology in Mozambique  
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¶2. Mozambique has signed and ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the Convention on Biological Diversity. A National Biosafety Framework was drafted to help guide further development of biotechnology activities. These regulatory framework efforts were largely due to the presence of a UNEP/GEF program for 18 months that helped prepare the National Biosafety Frameworks "in agreement with the provisions of Cartagena Protocol" and help Mozambique ratify the Protocol. Thus, there are regulators with some training and understanding of biosafety issues such as assessment of food safety, environmental risk evaluation, LMO detection, etc.

¶3. Mozambique is eager to improve its agricultural productivity and recognizes that biotechnology can be a valuable tool to enhance the efficiency of its farming sector and help in reducing dependence on inputs while improving the quality of food. However, there has been little or no investment so far in biotechnology research although some strides have been made with biosafety regulation.

¶4. Due to the potential of the agriculture sector in Mozambique, and the lack of investment/advancement in that sector, the Government of Mozambique made a call for a second green revolution for Mozambique. One of the tools that will be a leading factor in bringing change and advancement in the agriculture sector in Mozambique will be the promotion and use of biotechnology.

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NATIONAL BIOSECURITY REGULATION ON GMO'S  
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¶5. Identified as a cross-cutting technology in Mozambique's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy, due to the enormous potential this technology has to impact various sectors of the economy, biotechnology policy development is moving more rapidly in Mozambique than in Madagascar. A National Biosecurity Regulation on Genetically Modified Organisms was published in the GOM official bulletin on April 25, 2007.

¶6. This regulation was formulated by the Inter-Institutional Group on Biosecurity (GIIBS). The GIIBS is tasked to co-ordinate biosafety activities in Mozambique. It is an inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary group with the task of coordinating the process to establish the National Biosafety Framework including the development of biosafety policy, regulatory regime, and administration based on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which Mozambique ratified in December 2001.

¶7. The Ministry of Science and Technology is the national competent authority and presides over the GIIBS. The GIIBS consists of representatives from each of the following Ministries: Science and Technology, Agriculture, Environment, Health, Industry and Commerce, Fisheries, Planning and Development, and academic and research institutions. Additionally, representatives and specialists from public and private entities may be invited to participate in GIIBS meetings. (Note: Mozambique's biosafety policy appears to be largely risk-averse, and rooted in the 'precautionary principle' and thus more similar to the policies of European countries and that of EU. End Note)

¶8. Mozambique has experience with biotech-related controversies and issues as it is a receiving/shipping point for donated corn from the United States for famine stricken-regions in Southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe etc).

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Previous Biotech Outreach in Mozambique  
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¶9. Using USDA Emerging Markets Program funding, FAS/Pretoria included three Mozambicans in an agricultural biotechnology informational tour of the United States in November 2009. In FY2008, FAS/Pretoria secured funding from USDA's Emerging Markets Programs to host a workshop on basic biotechnology and regulations. The workshop provided an opening to further advance biotechnology and biosafety policies in Mozambique. The meeting featured lectures by two invited experts from overseas, Dr. C. S. Prakash, Tuskegee University, and Dr. Martin Lema, biosafety regulator from Argentina, along with some very high-level policy experts from various local ministries -- Science and Technology, Agriculture, Environment, Health, and Trade; along with university scientists and also representatives from CGIAR centers.

¶10. As a result of this workshop and the relationships developed during those two days, FAS/Pretoria was invited to participate in a biotechnology regulations conference sponsored by the GRM and the Spanish Embassy in Maputo. FAS/Pretoria provided for the participation of a biotechnology researcher from South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), who is also an active member of AfricaBio, Dr. Eugenia Barros. Dr. Barros was a speaker and moderator at the conference. She provided an excellent overview of biotechnology in South Africa and lessons learned through the development of its biosafety policy. Dr. Barros is a native Portuguese speaker, which lent more credibility and audience acceptance to her participation. Since the conference, Dr. Barros' has remained in contact with the legislators and regulators in Mozambique and has consulted with them on various issues relating to biotechnology regulation implementation.

¶11. Also in the past year, the Embassy hosted an Embassy Science Fellow to work with the GRM to prepare a report of the status of biotechnology in Mozambique and an implementation plan for advancement of biotechnology in Mozambique. An important observation made throughout the biotechnology outreach efforts over the past year was the important need for capacity building to implement the biosafety regulation in their countries, especially in the development of specialists in food safety, environmental risk

assessment, and intellectual property rights issues.

¶12. The GRM has requested assistance in planning and implementing producer outreach strategies, including the development of educational materials in Portuguese. AfricaBio is working with contacts in Mozambique in developing these materials but are looking for assistance in funding the publication of said materials.

¶13. COMMENT: There is serious potential for growth and investment in the agricultural sector in Mozambique. Clear rules and better understanding on the part of the GRM will attract greater foreign investment. The USG can continue to support the agricultural sector by supporting the implementation of sensible biosafety regulations and increased domestic research and capacity building. END COMMENT.  
CHAPMAN